

# **Oral History Cover Sheet**

**Name:** June White

**Date of Interview:** December 22, 1997

**Location of Interview:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Warehouse

**Interviewer:** Debra Corbett

**Approximate years worked for Fish and Wildlife Service:** 22 years

**Offices and Field Stations Worked, Positions Held:** Warehouse Person in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Warehouse.

**Most Important Projects:** Remodeling of the Warehouse.

**Colleagues and Mentors:** Frank Pratt, Peggy Thomas, Rudy Sandoval, Larry York, Sandy Groth,

**Most Important Issues:** The duties and positions of the workers in the warehouse.

**Brief Summary of Interview:** June White started with the Fish and Wildlife Service as a mail clerk, then became a supply technician, and ended her career in the Fish and Wildlife Service Warehouse. Upon beginning her work at the warehouse, she almost immediately suffered a leg injury that kept her from working for nine months. After that story, she discusses her duties in the warehouse, the people that work for her, and the decisions she made that led her to her imminent retirement.

December 22, 1997

Talking with June White in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Warehouse – who is retiring soon and moving to Monette, Arkansas.

Interview conducted by Debra Corbett

Deb: So, June, how long have you been working for the Fish and Wildlife Service?

June: Twenty-two years – I started in 1975.

Deb: Did you come from another agency?

June: No, this was it. I started as mail clerk, then went to supply technician, then I started the warehouse!

Deb: How long ago was this?

June: 1982. The warehouse moved a lot! We were on the second floor of this building, around my desk, down the hall or downstairs. If furniture came in, it was lined up from “here to there” then it had to be separated out to see whom it belonged to.

Deb: So they decided they needed a warehouse person after more and more supplies and furniture began to arrive? How many people were working here when you started?

June: When I started, in 1975, there were about 40 people in the Regional Office.

Deb: So that was before ANILCA refuges. Then ANILCA made a lot more people come in, right?

June: Yes.

Deb: So you created the warehouse? So, when it “got out of your office” was the first warehouse established just before this building was remodeled?

June: Yes. The supplies were on the second floor, where Federal Aid is located now.

Deb: It is hard to imagine a Regional Office without a warehouse!

June: When I started working, the Regional Office was at 813 D Street (downtown Anchorage) I started as the mail clerk, then supply clerk. Jo Gorder replaced me as the mail clerk.

Deb: When did Vic come to work here?

June: He has been here about 15 years. We had another mail clerk before Vic and I can't think of her name. She had a stroke. Lucy was the switchboard operator.

Deb: There was a "switchboard?"

June: Yes, an "in-house switchboard" and she was the operator – then she "switched" to copy clerk.

Deb: How long has Lucy been here?

June: Lucy has been here 18 years; about the same time that I became the warehouse person.

Deb: So, June, what have been some of the highpoints of your career – supplying us with everything we need? (laughter)

June: Well, I have worked with some pretty wonderful people. I really have enjoyed working and enjoyed not having someone look over my shoulder. I've never had that here and I don't like a desk job so I avoided such. That's what I am trying to do today – catch up on stuff before the new person arrives. I don't know of any really low points – except when I was injured and off work for nine months.

Deb: Oooh, maybe you should tell us about that! Let me make sure this recorder is getting all of this! Nine months?

June: Yes. We were putting some tables on the lift gate to go on the truck and the notch that was holding the back table broke and we had a guy on each end and me in the middle. They were able to step out of the way when it broke! I tried to run but wasn't able to get out of the way. One leg was crushed. When I returned to work, I only worked half days to start with.

Deb: Did you think it was all over then? Warehouse work?

June: No. The doctor said that I might lose my leg, but I didn't! As long as I had my leg, I didn't figure it was over. The table hit right in the bend of the knee and threw me into the concrete. There were three tables and a cart. We had a YCC guy and the property officer and myself. Neither of us could lift the tables by ourselves. They weighed 196 pounds each.

Deb: And you had three of them on your leg? What a miracle your leg wasn't taken off. Wow! I haven't heard this story before. When did this happen?

June: In 1983. Just after I got the job as the warehouse person! What a beginning!

Deb: So, what does a "warehouse person" do?

June: I receive all freight, call people to come and get it and all other items coming in. I ship everything out to field stations or wherever. I have property accountability, card-key system, things have been added all through the years with the addition of people. It has really become quite a job! (laughter) I also have the accountable forms. I've just absorbed more duties. We only had one person for supply and mail clerk and everything. There was one person in the personnel office and now there are several more.

Deb: Your position has always been under Contracting? And your boss when you started was ---

June: Peggy Thomas was the one – no, actually Frank Pratt, because he came on before Peggy. Frank hired Peggy and Faye Bishope (Personnel) and then Carolyn Hickey after Peggy. Then Winston Jacobson became Chief of Contracting and General Services.

Deb: So, when you became the warehouse person and there was a new mail clerk, and then a copy clerk, were you always their supervisor?

June: No, I wasn't until Rudy Sandoval – he came on in 1980 as the property officer. I was property officer until Rudy came on board. Portland Regional Office had done all our property up until 1980 when we became a Region.

Deb: Property officer has to keep track of –

June: All the property. Everything! And we didn't have computers back then either.

Deb: When did you get the “miracle machines” – when did you start having to use them?

June: We first got the “bee hives” – do you remember them? Well that is what they looked like – a bee hive. It was pretty interesting since it was the first one. Then, we went from there to more like what we have now – smaller and better over the years. I don't believe anyone in the Regional Office had computers except IRM --they were starting to keep track of things. There was a lot more property to keep track of also. It's just been the last three years or so that we had the high threshold of property. I had to keep track of calculators, hand-held radios, etc.

Deb: I remember a search for compasses – the Brunton compasses. I think they cost \$150.00 each. We couldn't find them.

June: I've done a lot of searching for property. When Rudy Sandoval retired, they abolished his job – his title – in 1989.

Deb: What has it been like being a supervisor?

June: Well, it has been very interesting. I never really thought much about it but I knew both Vic (Scott) and Lucy (Odden) and, of course, really liked them and didn't have many problems with either. They know their jobs and they do it! It really took very little supervising with those two individuals.

Deb: Twenty-two years! You've seen a lot of things come and go – with constant growth!

June: Yes – every way – from typing by hand to computers. I lost three years work on one! (Laugh-laugh-laugh) that really wasn't funny! I really never had much trouble with computers until one day it “crashed” and had no way to get it back! I had sat for at least 5-6 hours nearly every day trying to get everything entered – three years worth of work! I kept hoping IRM could bring out a miracle and get it back but no such luck.

Deb: (more laughter) I'm sorry, I'm not one to talk about computers! Glad I wasn't in the warehouse that day! (Laughter) Did you go home early that day? So the benefits of a computer were kinda hard to see early on.

June: Yes, and I'm still a little skeptical. I try to maintain a hard copy as well.

Deb: When did you start thinking about retiring?

June: Well, probably a couple years ago. My husband was thinking about retiring and he has already retired. He worked on the slope. He is in Arkansas already. The house is built but finishing up the shed, garage, yard and all that kind of stuff. He has been down there since August. He came up here in November but he won't be here for Christmas.

Deb: So how did you get the job with the Fish and Wildlife Service?

June: I baby-sat for Don DeVall's son, Douglas. Ron was actually what “ABA” (Assistant Regional Director for Budget and Administration) is now. He was over General Services (and one or two others – laughter) His mail clerk quit and I had already told my employer in January that I was giving them six months notice that I would be quitting and retiring from baby-sitting – I had had it with children! One day Ron came in to pick up his son and he told me about the vacant position and would I be interested. So I took the test and finally passed it – I don't do well with timed test! At the beginning of the test, I thought I would get a “jump” on the thing and went ahead and filled in my name, etc. on every sheet and on the last page, the instructions were to “not fill in any of this” so I was behind before I got started! (Laughter)

Deb: So you basically invented the procedures for getting things checked in and you invented the organization?

June: Yes, and as new things cropped up, they were just added on. There, to my knowledge, was no “warehouse” handbook. They have been wanting me to write one for here. There is no time to sit down and to do such. I’m amazed that we have been in here this long without someone –

Deb: Makes you wonder what’s going on, doesn’t it (laughter) It seems like it is mostly just common sense and organization, is that not right? Do you get the same delivery people?

June: It is, for the most part, yes, we get the same delivery folks. We are losing our postman. He stops the 26<sup>th</sup> and I don’t envy that person – walking right in here and asking, “what did she do when she was here?” I am working on getting this place organized and straightened up a bit. I’m now starting to develop a “short-timer’s” attitude. It’ll be here when I’m gone!

Deb: We now have several warehouses around, did you have control over those as well? Vegetation stuff, migratory bird warehouses, etc.?

June: Initially, yes, but there was no way one person could do it. Needed more people and equipment. Research also had their warehouse. Then when Larry York passed away (which was a very low time for us) – everyone started moving and getting relocated and so for the past two-three years just shifted furniture around. Larry died just before all the moving got going. Sandy Groth blessed me with her assistance. She came in one day and said, “I believe you could use a little help” and I said, “I believe I could!” So she was a high point in my career in helping me. We shipped out lots of old furniture – shipped some to the military base as surplus, then to the metal recycle and wherever we could find someplace to take it. Sandy helped me out for several months. She was priceless. There was no way you could pay that woman what she was worth to me and to the Service! I don’t believe folks realized what we did. There was no way I could have done all the work by myself. One day out in front of Arctic Business Park someone had taken two loads of window seals and metal frames and just set them down out there. They were covered up with snow

and I was told that those had to be protected. Well, we had the warehouse full of furniture but we had to get the window frames out of the snow! So we went out there, dug them out and slid them in wherever we could find a place. We had to get rid of computers and keep track of all excess property. That was certainly a lot of fun! – Actually I looked at it as “just one more piece out of my way! We rented a large truck to deliver some of the stuff. We almost got thrown off the base for taking a 40-foot truck out there full of furniture. I’ll never hear the end of that! After that, they always asked, “what size truck will you be driving?” This moving lasted well over a year – in fact it is still going on. I hope I never see another piece of furniture! I have a palette kinda hid back in the back right now.

Everyone was getting new furniture and the old stuff had to go somewhere – and the partitions – don’t remind me of those horrible things! Everyday, someone would say, “move those partitions out of the hall!” The partitions are what partially filled up that 40-foot truck. Jim Coleman (Research warehouseman) and I took a 32-foot truck that had metal floorboards and of course, all of this was in the wintertime and I’m pulling out partitions from the back and Jim is handing them to the guy and I slipped under some partitions and they all fell on top of me. I had flashbacks of my previous accident only this one was a little different; I hit my head so that was all right! At least they were soft. I hit that metal wheel well. I couldn’t hardly walk for a few days --had a headache. So now when I go out with a load of partitions, they just make me come inside and sit down! (Laughter)

Deb: June, you mentioned earlier that there were stories but not enough time to tell. Are there any in particular that you would care to tell? I can come back at a later time if you do think of some that you would like to share.

June: Well, I would have to think awhile. I’ll let you know and you may can come back. We use to have some Christmas parties and the people that were here then were something else. Some interesting characters.

**Key Words**

artifacts

automobiles

children

city environments

document

history

motor vehicles

personnel

places (human made)

planning

safety

vehicles

youth